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**by Edward T. Chase**

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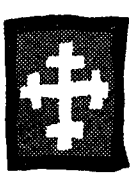

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THE
# Commonweal
A Weekly Review of Public Affairs, Literature, and the Arts
THIRTY-SIXTH YEAR OF PUBLICATION

## week by week

### THE BATTLE RENEWED

PRESIDENT Eisenhower has now delivered to Congress his foreign aid request for this year. It would be heartening if this action were to arouse immediate public interest—in the way, for example, that the proposal to include birth control in foreign aid did—but few would argue that this is likely to be so.

Perhaps it would be unrealistic to expect too much in the way of popular response to Presidential foreign aid requests. The program has, after all, been part of basic United States foreign policy since shortly after World War II, and it is probably natural enough that little excitement is produced by the President's specific request in any one year. But when the lack of popular response is combined with the fact that the foes of foreign aid are now more determined and more vocal than ever, a program that is vital to our own national interest and to the cause of world peace is in serious danger.

The total amount asked by the President this year is slightly over four billion dollars—an increase of roughly one billion dollars over last year. Of this sum, about half is earmarked for military aid for allies overseas. The balance is to be used for what most people have in mind when they think of foreign aid—economic assistance for the underprivileged nations.

On the military side of the matter, the President's arguments for his program remain unchanged. The two billion intended for military spending overseas, he said, is in his considered judgment "the minimum amount consistent with the maintenance of a firm and adequate defense position" against "the menace of Communist imperialism."

As far as economic aid is concerned, the President noted that in underdeveloped countries all over the globe there is a movement of formerly suppressed peoples toward food and freedom. The yearnings of these people are justified, and it would be contrary to our national interest if their aspirations were frustrated, yet they cannot be achieved without our aid. We must, therefore, help them.

THE PRESIDENT'S message contained no surprises and clearly indicated that the Administration is not prepared to break new ground in this field during its last year in office. As a result, Congressional reaction has so far ranged from the tepid and lukewarm to the downright hostile.

Congressman Thomas E. Morgan, Democratic chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, said his group would eye the program critically in search of "any waste and inefficiencies." In the Senate the respected Mike Mansfield of Montana spoke for many when he said that the President had "called for too much money and too little change in administration."

Such reactions in Congress illustrate very well the difficulties the foreign aid program is likely to have this time around. Supporters of foreign aid have always had to overcome the determined opposition of those who fight the program because of their own narrow conception of national interest and of America's role in the world. But these are no longer the foreign aid program's only critics.

Even among those committed to the idea that America must accept its responsibility in the international community of nations, there is today a growing feeling that our foreign aid program is far from what it should be. There is, for example, a feeling that too much emphasis has been placed on the military, not enough on economic development. There is an increasing realization that the administration of the program is sometimes unimaginative and inept. And there is a very firm conviction, at least among some of the critics, that the case



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for foreign aid has been argued too much in terms of national self-interest; the American people, this thesis goes, are generous, and foreign aid would fare better if it were justified in terms of the world's need rather than in the narrower terms of self-interest and national defense against Communism.

We ourselves would tend to be sympathetic to such criticism of the foreign aid program. We certainly think, for example, that our economic assistance program is too little, whether or not it is too late. Nonetheless, the choice before us, it must be remembered, is not between the program Mr. Eisenhower has suggested and the ideal program. The choice is between the President's proposals and a penny-wise, pound-foolish substitute. Under these circumstances, the decision should be clear.

## THE CHESSMAN CASE

WE ARE glad that Caryl Chessman has been reprieved, glad that California's Governor Pat Brown has acted as he did and has asked the state legislature to consider a bill to abolish capital punishment. We are glad for much the same reasons, we think, as those that animate the thousands of people who have been urging clemency.

Like most of those who have concerned themselves with this case, we have a fundamental distaste for capital punishment. On all counts—the reverence due human life itself, the demands of justice, the good ordering of society—the taking of human life by the state is, at the least, a profoundly dubious idea. Beyond this, however, are the facts that in this case the death penalty was invoked where no life had been taken and that the condemned man has lived more than twelve years now at the very threshold of the death chamber. Finally, it would be dishonest and hypocritical to pretend to be uninterested in the overseas reaction to this case. This is not to say that American courts of law must adapt the exercise of justice under United States law to the preferences of other peoples or to the best interests of our diplomacy. Yet we may, and indeed should, pay attention to the opinions of our fellow men in other lands.

Having made this clear, however, we think that the Chessman case, and the reaction to it abroad, have given rise to a great number of confusions. Notwithstanding our deep sympathy for the ordeal this man has undergone, we think it a bad mistake to make a martyr of him, to describe his trial, conviction, sentencing and the preparations to carry out the sentence as inhuman miscarriages of justice. Caryl Chessman was convicted of seventeen felonies, including kidnapping, robbery and attempted rape. The seven stays of execution he has won, the fifteen appeals to the United States Supreme Court, have all been based on technicalities of legal procedure. Despite frequent hints of new evidence, even knowledge of the "real criminals," neither Chessman nor his lawyers have in these years produced even a shred of such evidence.

A more important objection must be made against the overseas critics who use the Chessman case as a point of departure for misconceived anti-American outbursts. *Le Monde* in Paris, for instance, sees the case as an absurd example of the United States judicial system. The *Manchester Guardian* says there is something radically wrong with a judicial system that can allow delays such as the twelve years Chessman has spent in a death cell. And similar sentiments have been expressed in newspapers nearly all over the world.

We may concede that a twelve-year delay in carrying out a death sentence seems excessive, but Chessman's ordeal has come about, it must be remembered, because he took advantage of every recourse available to him under our judicial system. It may be argued by some that this system offers the criminal too many recourses, but most will agree that safeguards for individual rights are vital to the maintenance of a democratic society.

The foreigners who have been sharply critical of America's Chessman case are right—such a situation could probably not develop in any other country in the world. But this would be primarily because no other judicial system permits the individual such broad avenues of appeal and re-appeal and higher appeal. The judicial systems of other lands are not likely to give rise to anomalies and embarrassments like the Chessman case because in most countries the convicted felon would undergo his punishment quickly and, as it were, efficiently. What is at the root of the present situation, then—messy, illogical and cruel as it may seem—is not the weakness of our judicial system but its strength. This we would insist upon, even as we regret the circumstances this strength sometimes leads to.

These objections and distinctions having been made, we reiterate our satisfaction in Governor Brown's decision. Caryl Chessman's fate is still uncertain, of course, but Mr. Brown has at least opened a possible avenue of solution. If the California state legislature heeds the Governor's plea and abolishes capital punishment, it will mean that Chessman will not be put to death, and this will be an occasion of thankfulness. Moreover, such



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action by the California legislature will mean that the state of California henceforth will put no man to death, and this will be an occasion for even greater thankfulness. For the sake of Caryl Chessman, for the sake of the other men and women whose lives will not be taken from them, and for the sake of the moral life of the entire nation, we hope it will turn out that way.

## SOUTH AMERICAN MISSION

THE fifteen-thousand-mile trip on which President Eisenhower set forth on Washington's Birthday can be counted on to attain certain objectives. His talks with heads of States and addresses before national legislatures in Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Uruguay—and his gestures of greeting to the crowds—should find the President at his best. His sincere interest in human well-being and his dedication to peace will be manifest. It should be possible for him to mollify some of the popular resentment over our comparative neglect of the culture, the economies and the peoples themselves of the other Americas. Mr. Eisenhower has a happy faculty for engendering official and even popular goodwill.

To what extent can the Eisenhower mission be expected to remedy the more deeply rooted causes of resentment and hostility toward the United States? Some of the anti-Yankee furor is directly inspired by Communist agitators in and out of firmly organized labor unions. It is supported by a flow of books and periodicals, and by Communist influence among South American intellectuals and university students. And even if nothing comes of the hostile demonstrations threatened by these elements, it is difficult to see how the President's visit will from then on reduce the effectiveness of these ably concentrated Communist efforts.

What South Americans resent most about their lot is not only their poverty, insecurity and failure to obtain a due share of the material blessings produced by modern technology but also the inequities of their general socio-economic set-up. The United States with its extensive investments and South American branch offices is all too readily identified with these hated inequities. One could cite the vast gulf between the living standards of the wealthy and the proletariat in those countries, the deplorable division of fertile land between the few rich owners of large plantations and the many peons who actually cultivate the soil, the abysmally low wages and arduous working conditions in mines and factories (which serve as such a contrast to high managerial salaries and extensive company profits that are often shipped out of the country of origin and banked in foreign lands). It makes a sorry catalogue. But there are strong limitations on what the United States can do to intervene in the domestic affairs of other nations.

What we can do, however, is to avoid aggravating the situation for peoples already living close to the margin of bare subsistence; we can check, or compensate for, substantial fluctuations in our demand and prices for the raw material exports essential to their various national economies. And we can help them to become less dependent upon such exports by supplying the loans, grants and technical assistance required to set up appropriate national industries in South America. This means wide expansion of a program already begun.

As a gesture, then, the President's South American mission should have some value in terms of improved goodwill. But it should hardly be expected to perform wonders by itself; his visit alone is unlikely to produce any great change in what should be a much happier relationship.

## MANDATORY SHELTERS?

AMERICANS seem to be conditioned to take in stride almost anything they see in the papers. Still, it gave many people a start to read in so many words that a committee appointed by Governor Rockefeller seriously recommends that fallout shelters be made mandatory for all residential buildings in New York State by July 1, 1963. Here is a clearly logical reaction to a realistic appraisal of Soviet missile capabilities.

Whatever may be said of the practical difficulties involved in putting through so extensive a program for survival, the announcement does have shock value. It could serve as a sort of handwriting on the wall for political leaders and peoples virtually the world over. But the warning is directed primarily to America and the other three nations that now have the thermonuclear weapon. The proposed bomb-shelter system for all underlines the heightening urgency for setting up international nuclear weapon controls. In the meantime no false economies can be allowed to restrict American missile and anti-missile development to the point that the Soviets attain an overwhelming advantage, but the danger of a thermonuclear war "through miscalculation" alone has become too great for mankind to rely on the stop-gap of a ter-



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ror balance. Basically, human survival depends on the establishing of effective international controls.

## A DIOCESAN SYNOD

IT IS NOT, perhaps, surprising that the diocesan synod for Rome aroused interest even before it was convened. And possibly it should not be surprising that the widespread interest led to unfounded rumors and unbalanced speculation about the purpose and intention of the synod. But it is surprising and highly regrettable that many of the misdirected speculations were exaggerated rather than quelled by the synod itself.

Some of the confusion probably results from an incomplete understanding of the nature and scope of the Roman synod. What was addressed to particular and parochial conditions was too easily applied by the secular and the religious press to the conditions which obtain in all dioceses. Some opening comments of the Pope should be recalled to help place the synod in its proper context. The synod itself, was not, the Pope disclosed, his own idea. It had been suggested to him, however, that before the General Council of the Church convened, the Pope's own diocese might benefit from particular attention. Acknowledging that this was the first diocesan synod to be held in Rome—although other dioceses throughout the world have held them frequently and canon law provides that they be held in each diocese every ten years—the Pope warned against judging Rome too harshly. She has not been administered without law or without order. Nevertheless, Rome, the capital city of the Christian world, has particular burdens and particular problems. To these the provisions of the synod were addressed.

The agenda of the synod provides further evidence for correctives to unsound inferences. The areas of consideration were eight: first, matters pertaining to the clergy; second, the magisterium of the Church; third, the liturgy; fourth, the administration of the sacraments; fifth, the lay apostolate in all its forms; sixth, Christian education; seventh, preservation of art works and buildings; and eighth, charitable work and institutions.

Listed as baldly as this, these areas which the synod participants considered might seem to have more than local application. But the particular burdens of Rome, to which the Pope alluded and which were developed by Archbishop Traglia over the Vatican radio on the eve of the synod, must be kept in mind. Within fifty years Rome has grown from a city of 400,000 to two million inhabitants. The very great number of parishes, churches, chapels, schools, religious houses, seminaries, retreats—all that is now crowded into Rome—adds to the burden of her dual role as diocese and center of the Church's administration.

With the strains of this dual role in mind, the synod provision that Rome follow the pattern of Paris and be divided ecclesiastically into four parts is understandable. This proposal alone should indicate that the many others are not intended for detailed imitation by other diocesan synods, and other clearly limited proposals could be listed.

But these proposals, it must be granted, are probably not those which have provoked concern among even sympathetic critics in the secular press as well as the non-Catholic religious press. Out of the almost eight hundred proposals which the synod reviewed for possible future legislation, these critics have singled out about ten which are principally of a restrictive nature. What does it mean, they ask, when Catholics are urged to oppose the passing of laws and regulations that injure the Catholic faith? When the clergy are warned to give obedience to the head of the state and secular authorities? When Catholics are warned against reading works of Protestant, modernist, atheistic, or materialistic outlook?

These are serious questions, which demand, and can receive, serious and sensible answers. But if one asks, as did one prominent Protestant journal, "What will it mean for U.S. legislators that the synod proposes that Catholics be 'obliged in pain of excommunication to enact no laws harmful to the Church'?" the question is no longer serious. It places in one context what is intended for and applies to another. To recall again the cautions of Pope John, while the teachings of the Church remain unchangeable, the discipline and accidental forms may be modified "according to the times and the circumstances."

Some few of the restrictive synodal proposals, even as they apply only to present-day Rome, will seem to many too redolent of the defensive attitude adopted by the Church in the nineteenth century. They would seem to invite defensive retreat rather than positive engagement. But this is only an additional reason why they should not be transposed to America and then proposed as serious Church-State or Catholic-Protestant questions. We have yet to solve all the difficulties of present-day America. We will not come closer to solving them by adopting either the problems of Rome or the specific efforts of the Roman synod to deal with them.



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# Strangulation by Auto

*Our communities cannot survive at even their present qualitative level without remedial action soon*

by EDWARD T. CHASE

THIS COUNTRY, with all the nations of the industrialized West, has perhaps ten years left in which to adapt to the automobile. If we fail in this task of adaptation, the penalty will be an irremediable debasement of our environment. The United States, with its 325 cars per 1000 population, as against 50 in Western Europe, is suffering first, but England and Europe are not many years behind. And the effects abroad will be even more grievous, because of the medieval pattern and scale of their roads and cities, their much more limited geographical space, and because disruption of an older culture means destruction of architectural and historic treasures.

Three concurrent developments make the rise of the automobile menacing. First, a universal migration into the metropolis, principally its suburban fringes (ninety per cent of postwar U.S. population growth has been absorbed in metropolitan areas). Second, the continuing rapid growth in population. Third, increasing economic wherewithal enabling practically every working man to have a car.

The situation is alarming because we know that societies have failed to come to terms with environmental factors before. And there is almost no precedent of man having to adjust to so radical and pervasive an influence as the motor car. Man can live with the auto come what may, of course. But his communities cannot survive at even their present qualitative level without remedial action soon.

Yet discouraging as the prospects are, they are not hopeless. For instance, a little noted Federal announcement of the very greatest significance was released from Washington on Christmas, of all days. Issued by the Federal Housing and Home Finance Administrator, Norman P. Mason, the announcement stipulated that henceforth funds to communities for urban planning will be made available only upon two conditions:

First, that such plans for urban areas, to qualify for Federal aid, cannot be piecemeal but must cover *entire* metropolitan areas, both the urban core and suburban fringes.

Second, that plans must cover not just some but *all* of the basic essentials for sound urban development—i.e., not just highways; also plans setting forth overall land use, provision for schools and recreation, etc.

TO THE experts who can visualize these principles this says a mouthful. The significance of this is not that anything earthshaking has happened, as yet, but that the national government has now made an official response to the few but insistent voices crying out that we must make *comprehensive* plans. It has been realized at last that *coordinating* transport and urban redevelopment and growth plans is the only chance of saving our environment. To the Brookings Institution's Wilfred Owen, author of the brilliant *Cities in the Motor Age* (Viking), must go much of the credit for this now accepted diagnosis of "the urban problem," with formidable assists from writer Lewis Mumford, consultants Carl Feiss and Miles Colean, originator of the now household term "urban renewal" in his book *Renewing Our Cities* (20th Century Fund), Martin Meyerson of Harvard, and the handful of other scholars who brought urban studies to a new level of sophistication in the 1950's.

So violent is the antagonism of many to the high tail-finned American car and the whole automotive complex—General Motors, roadside blight, superhighways, congestion, parking, smog, sudden death—that it is sometimes difficult to establish that we must accommodate ourselves to the automobile age whether we choose to or not. It is in part this inability to reconcile ourselves to the fact that the automobile has become a necessity that obstructs essential action. This holds for Congress, too, which in 1960 must solve the acute financing problems of the huge Federal Highway Pro-

Mr. Chase, a regular contributor, writes frequently on urban planning and national resources.



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gram so that construction can proceed on schedule or else see our national economic growth severely inhibited.

Those who protest that rubber-wheeled transport is being subsidized to the detriment of other transport; that our real problems are the collapse of our urban mass transit systems, and our commuter rail lines; or that the recent big Federal programs should have been in education or in urban renewal rather than in highways all have their points. Yet these arguments, unfortunately, are beside the mark, as Owen has demonstrated by implication. The truth is that in the 1960's we must progress in all these areas, but that we cannot progress without building—and wisely planning—the underpinning of an expanded automotive transport system.

Rubber-wheeled transport is crucial owing not only to the American preference for the private automobile but to the new pattern of the environment in which we work and live. The vast agglomeration of built-up areas, known as urban or metropolitan regions, have a character of dispersion that can only be serviced by automotive transport. Our residences require the use of the car; industry, in its new one-story modern quarters adjacent to multiple-lane highways, requires the giant diesel truck. Everything from the nature of our recreation and the exodus to the suburbs to basic developments like population growth and the shift in our energy sources, such as the pipeline transmission of natural gas—all conspire to expand and disperse our urban complexes in a form that makes automotive transportation a critical necessity.

Since transportation is so vital a factor in determining the costs of production and distribution, the use of natural resources, the numbers of employed and the demand for materials, it is the single most important dynamic in a nation's economy. And thus, perhaps with some reluctance, we must come to the reality that the economic achievements predicted for the 1960's will not come to pass unless the vast highway systems planned in the Federal program are built on schedule.

Economist Wilfred Owen has demonstrated that for every dollar of our Gross National Product we move four tons of material one mile. The $700 billion Gross National Product conservatively estimated by 1975 indicates roughly a doubling in transport demand between now and then. The roads to handle this demand constitute the biggest single element in the foundation upon which our new national economic structure is to be based.

On the passenger side, the point to bear in mind is that the country will witness steadily rising personal incomes and a more even distribution of incomes. And the unswerving trend over many years is that consumers spend approximately 10 to 12 cents of every dollar for personal transportation. Accordingly, we can expect to see highway transportation continue to grow more rapidly than the other major forms of transport (indeed rail passenger travel is undergoing an absolute diminution).

WHAT should be clear, at this stage, is that all signs point to an irreversible upward growth trend in rubber-wheeled transport, like it or not, and the fact that the United States' economic potential will simply not be realized if the present crisis in our Federal aid highway program is not overcome. The sinking feeling one may get from this realization is that, meanwhile, the automobile is corrupting our environment so widely and so intensively that one almost wonders if the game is worth it. How is it possible, we must ask, to make this necessary adaptation to the harsh realities of the motor age?

The announcement quoted earlier from Federal Housing Administrator Norman P. Mason holds the key to the answer how to adapt. But before elaborating upon this, let us dispose of the questions raised at the outset, of the relative importance of and the relative role of the commuter rail system collapse, and the plea for priority for school construction and for urban renewal.

It is true that rails can move 50,000 persons per hour versus four to six thousand in cars on multi-lane expressways. Knowledgeable citizens of New York, Chicago, Philadelphia and Boston are keenly aware of this. But these are practically the only major cities in the country where commuter rail remains a major factor. The car and the bus are the means of travel elsewhere, for the very reasons that we have outlined before.

What must be done is to see to it that these rail facilities are sustained, improved, expanded. It is well to acknowledge the axiom that all forms of transport are needed; total dependence upon one form is disastrous, as we are finding out repeatedly. But let us not delude ourselves, simply because we may be New Yorkers or horrified commuters on the New Haven, that the plight of our cities can be solved by the single expedient of beefing up our commuter railroads and our rail rapid transit systems, necessary though they are to the cities that have them. We must courageously anticipate the continuing dominant role of the automobile and make *comprehensive* plans for the development of our metropolitan areas because of this—plans on the regional scale the car has created, and coordinating all interrelating public development programs—slum clearance, housing developments, parks, schools, hospitals, etc.

"Courageously" adapt to the car means, in a metropolis like New York, for example, an end to the scandalous nonsense whereby the Port of New York Authority turns its back on the rails and limits use of the vast sums generated by its profitable bridge and tunnel tolls



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to subsidize the airports and build still more facilities for the progress of multitudes into the heart of the metropolitan area. What is called for here is conversion of the Authority into a regional authority over all transportation, so that the financial resources go into a general fund designed to maintain the healthy growth of a balanced transportation system.

IT IS one thing to concede the paramount place of rubber-wheeled transport in mid-twentieth century America, as we must. It is another to proliferate highways indiscriminately, to the jeopardy of other social and economic values, in the single-minded delusion that movement of vehicles alone is the proper end of transport planning or that *all* travel needs can be met by the rubber-wheeled vehicle.

Balance is an important word in transport. The Eastern Railroad presidents, bedeviled as they are by an archaic tax system and the overwhelming competition of the automobile, and made eloquent by their desperation, managed recently to persuade the American Municipal Association at its annual meeting that the expeditious way to solve the urban commuting mess would be to rehabilitate the rail systems, possible at a cost of three and a half billion dollars, whereas to handle the urban commuters by expressways for rubber-wheeled transport would cost us $35 billions.

Once again, the reality is that our cities cannot survive by this either-or approach. Some public transport is essential. Burdening the auto with all travel needs, for example, the short-haul mass movements by downtown subways, or journeys best accomplished by foot, results in a congestion that defeats not only mobility but destroys the community amenities that may have invited travel in the first instance. As a matter of fact, in certain urban cores, the day is at hand when we will see a vast expansion of pedestrian malls; the time may not be far off when the busiest part of the most wealthy and fabulous street in America, Fifth Avenue, New York, will be reserved for the pedestrian alone.

And as for the criticism (which emerged belatedly during the last Presidential election) that the road program instead of being our nation's very biggest public works should have been secondary to a huge school building program, it is persuasive, since our school deficiency is real enough. But, as has been shown, transport facilities, and preeminently rubber-wheeled transport, are a precondition of all social and economic growth. Every responsible analysis of the school crisis, from Conant's to the Committee For Economic Development's, calls first of all for the consolidation of schools. And how do the children of the suburbs get to them? By bus, over roads still to be built or improved. Parenthetically, it is interesting to remember that the immense new school population was bred and resides in the vast suburbias of the housing boom—one of the keystones of our prosperous postwar economy—a boom unthinkable apart from the automobile.

Finally, in the case of urban renewal as a Federal aid program having possible precedence over the highway program, the argument above, that transport is the precondition for all growth, holds here too. There are other reasons, however, involving subtle political, economic, and social values. For instance, there is long historic precedent for the condemnation of land for so patent a public purpose as a road. Urban renewal, on the other hand, involving the unfamiliar tactic of Title I, whereby land became expropriated for varied ultimate uses, quite vague to the average citizen, and combined use of public funds and private venture capital—this has been a new concept that a decade has not yet made fully acceptable or comprehensible.

This fact goes a long way toward explaining the discrepancy between the large funds appropriated and those actually spent on projects. Happily we may see a surge in this effort, with greater stress on rehabilitation of existing structures instead of demolition of slums only, and an extension of Title I money to embrace some commercial and industrial urban redevelopment, so as to give needed balance.

THE REASON Mason's announcement is the key to how to live with the car is that, in calling for regional planning, it acknowledges that only by anticipating the ravages of the automobile on its own scale, namely, the hundreds of square miles cars can devour in a day at modern speeds, can we act to control its effects. It is this extraordinary new mobility that must be channelled.

Realization of this means that we *first* decide the priorities in land use: land for schools, for recreation, for commerce and industry, for residences—not abdicate what must be a planning decision to the tract developer or highway engineer. For traffic volume is mathematically predictable in terms of the uses to which urban land is put, since it is the kind of usage that generates the different magnitudes of traffic. That is why simply building more roads is never the solution to congestion.

Plans are hard enough to come by. But having achieved the plan, the greater hurdle still is to acquire the land in advance. Yet this need not be an insuperable hurdle. Already several states, led by California, have developed the tactic whereby enabling legislation has provided for a revolving fund with which the state can purchase rights-of-way years before actual construction. This principle can and must be extended to the purchase of land for all public purposes. William H. Whyte, Jr., the ingenious author of *The Organization Man*, has been pushing an extraordinary one-man campaign to promote the notion of leasing the development rights of open land, land still unpolluted by the auto.



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In this scheme, in the hope of preserving open rural land, the local or state government "rents" the rights to the land by paying the landowner a nominal sum on the proviso the land will not be sold or devoted to building, roads or other such usages. The idea has not exactly caught on, but in time some expedient like this will be an accepted responsibility of state government.

From all this, it is obvious that we cannot possibly maintain for long the amenities of our urban regions without regional authorities, such as the transportation authority recommended earlier. The job must start with transportation because transportation is the preconditioning factor for all development.

Our institutional organizations are being made obsolete by overwhelming technological changes, and the public sectors of our national life are where this shows up the most clearly because public services lack the degree of support and effort that is devoted to the pursuit of private wealth. It would not take much ingenuity to create new means to correct this situation, but it would take initiative. And the first step is public comprehension of why reforms are in order.

**AS OTHERS SEE US**

# A Religious Encounter

by JAMES FINN

THE RELIGIOUS situation in America is undergoing a significant and possibly profound change. If the goals can be but dimly grasped and the directions seem disconcertingly general, no attentive observer will deny that a movement is under way. If it continues it may well be that the major religious groups in America will no longer be able to regard themselves and each other as they once did. The history of Catholic-Protestant relations in this country has been marked by mutual suspicion, fear and hostility. Mutual criticism there has been, of course, but it was at best uneven and intermittent, the result of particular differences which arose here and there. And it was as unwelcome as it was uninvited.

Now, however, American Catholicism has reached that stage in its maturity where it not only expects critical examination by non-Catholics but can invite it. *American Catholics: A Protestant-Jewish View* (Edited by Philip Scharper. Sheed & Ward. $3.75.) is a token that the dialogue which not long ago was considered neither possible nor desirable is now both desirable and probable.

If this dialogue is to develop most fruitfully, all who are interested, and particularly those who expect to participate, should form some general expectations of what the dialogue entails. We must do this realistically if we are to avoid a foolish optimism, which would see in the enterprise neither risk nor danger, and an equally foolish cynicism, which would see in it neither value nor virtue. I suggest that American Catholics have recently been participating in an "inner dialogue," if I may thus appropriate the term, which provides a surprisingly good analogue to many aspects of the Catholic-Protestant-Jewish exchanges.

Even a cursory survey of this "inner dialogue" will reveal very real rewards and dangers inherent in the terms of such communication. Catholics have in recent years been engaged in a fairly vigorous program of self-criticism. They have, to state it bluntly, described the intellectual life of American Catholicism as inadequate and, with a view to finding remedies, they have sought out the causes.

THAT THE critics who first made the charges judged the situation accurately was clear from the almost immediate response which they received. For their views were confirmed and bolstered, most frequently by Catholics who had themselves made some contribution to the scholarly and intellectual life of American Catholicism. Yet the kindest surgeon must draw blood, and criticism which probed so deeply could not expect a total and immediate acceptance. It was soon suggested that there were proper and recognized channels for self-criticism, that those who had expressed their views publicly should be regarded with suspicion, as if they had been charged with disloyalty to the Catholic community—and not yet vindicated.

These Catholic critics thus found themselves under a double burden. In recalling Catholics to the fullness of their intellectual tradition and to the necessary risks of the intellectual life, they deliberately engaged themselves in debate with other Catholics who viewed the present situation differently. But they also exposed themselves to untenable criticism from Catholics who misunderstood their motives and misinterpreted their intent. Their criticism of the Catholic ghetto was too

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frequently read as criticism of the Catholic community. Those who were, and continue to be, most effective within the terms of this "inner dialogue" have not only prepared themselves to handle the terms of the debate but have exercised patience and charity under strong provocation. Without proper intellectual preparation all their good will would be useless, and without good will their criticism would be ineffective. Participants in the dialogue were severely tested on both counts.

Catholics may regret that this process of strong self-criticism, which is still going on, of course, was needed or that it was so long in coming. But this regret should not obscure the fact that the same criticism would not have been as effective if it had been made earlier. The conditions had to change; the charges had to be placed in the context of contemporary American Catholicism. It is one of the chief merits of the critics that they sensed the proper time in which to press their case.

BUT CONDITIONS have changed not only within Catholicism but within American life as well. The early position of Catholicism in this country was that of a minority religion in a society that was dominantly Protestant and a culture that was being rapidly secularized. We can now speak meaningfully of "post-Protestant" America, and the secularization of our culture is proceeding apace. Catholics and Protestants now see each other in a new context. It is time, some of them have agreed, to strive together for greater communication and understanding. In this context they have engaged in that civilized discourse we have agreed to call dialogue.

While much of this discourse should be a mutual exploration for the great values held in common, particularly by Catholics and Protestants, much must necessarily be analysis and evaluation, not only of our own religious group but of our companions in the dialogue. When we recall the suspicions, fears and anxieties aroused within the Catholic community by its self-criticism, we must be prepared to see stronger reactions when the criticism comes from without. Those who give themselves most fully to the demands of dialogue —those who are most candid, most receptive, most ready to distinguish the essentials, which cannot be changed, from the accidentals, which may well be changed—are most likely to be viewed with suspicion by their co-religionists. Inherited patterns of attitude and behavior are not readily cast aside; neither Protestant, Catholic nor Jew in our society is completely free of the prejudices and faults of his fathers. Yet we must acknowledge the new context of our relations and stop wasting our talents and energies on battles that should safely be consigned to the past.

Each of the contributors to *American Catholics*—four Protestants and two Jews—has clearly made this effort. In their candid assessment of various aspects of American Catholicism there is frequently a disarming acknowledgement of historically conditioned prejudice, of human fallibility, of incomplete knowledge. Yet, with admirable candor and varying degrees of intellectual rigor, each speaks within the terms of his particular commitment. And, gradually, there emerges a composite picture of what they see when they examine the Church in America.

Stringfellow Barr's essay is well placed first in the book. In recalling Socrates' distinction between eristic argument and dialectic, Mr. Barr, who speaks as an Anglican, injects several cautionary notes which the reader would do well to keep in mind as he goes through the book. The cautions are particularly relevant to Catholics who, Mr. Barr suggests, fear the risk of exposing themselves to dialectic. Yet they should be not the least eager to do so since "it is simply a brutal fact that American non-Catholics are afraid of the Catholic Church."

This "brutal fact" is amplified by Dr. Martin Marty, Associate Editor of the *Christian Century,* who, in a political context can speak of "the massive and consolidated authority which the papacy can command and summon," and say that "the existing examples to date of the adaptation of Catholics to the American scene have given little basis for a Protestant sense of security." It is further elaborated by Dr. Robert McAfee Brown, of Union Theological Seminary, when he explores sympathetically some possible answers to the question, "Who really speaks for Catholicism on such crucial issues as toleration, minority rights, and the relationship of church and state?"

These and related points are developed by the other Protestant, Dr. Allyn Robinson of the National Conference of Christians and Jews, and the two Jewish contributors, Mr. Arthur Cohen, publisher of Meridian Books, and Rabbi Arthur Gilbert of the Anti-Defamation League. The two Jews show a nervous concern for the community they represent that lends their essays a tone more commonly found in Catholic than in Protestant writing. In a sense Arthur Cohen's essay stands apart from the others, for he addresses himself less to the socio-political scene than to the theological. He has sharp criticisms, for example, of the phrase "spiritually we are Semites" and the ways in which Catholics have employed it, and he attacks the "myth" of the Judeo-Christian tradition. Yet what he regards as Christian condescension toward the Jew has implications for Catholic conduct in socio-political affairs.

As Father Gustave Weigel, S.J., notes in his afterword to this book, no Catholic should approach it with an expectation that the picture others have of the Church in America will be a mirror-image of what he himself sees. The image of the Church which emerges from these essays has some distinctly unprepossessing features. It is possible that American Catholics have fed



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too long on sour grapes and turn too dour a face on the accomplishments of others. And it is rather more than possible, we must admit, that the belligerence Catholics have frequently shown makes us appear less than charming to our neighbors.

SUCH ADMISSIONS are not always easy. No one likes to be told that he is unattractive; neither does any particular community welcome such a statement about itself. Our first impulse is to say that our standards for what constitutes attractiveness are different and, naturally, superior to other standards. Further, the observer has not seen us as we really are. He has stressed certain aspects of our behavior at the expense of others and, again naturally, the result is distortion.

But to retreat behind such defensive barricades is to retreat further from a proper engagement with our immediate world. It is to reject those insights usually granted only to the outside observer. It is to indulge in idle luxuries we can ill afford. If the dialogue is to bring American Catholics to a better understanding of what they share with Protestants and Jews we must be prepared to consider seriously even those descriptions of our conduct which seem at first glance to be without foundation.

But the true dialogue is, of course, an exchange, and the process of correction and assimilation can not be all on one side. The temptation to set the sun by one's own watch is a human, not a specifically Catholic, temptation. Protestants must come to recognize not only in the abstract, as many do, but in the concrete, as many do not, that whatever Americanism is, it is not wholly dependent upon the Protestant ethos. It remains lamentably true that because America early bore the imprint of Protestant values many still harbor the feeling that to be fully American one must be at least partially Protestant. Further, the legend of the "Catholic monolith," already rejected by many Protestants and Jews, must not continue to usurp the attention properly devoted to the profound concept of authority. Still further, some real effort must be made to understand Catholic teaching on natural law. Granted that Catholic communication has been faulty here, the term should not be burdened with the manifold and simple meanings so often attributed to it.

The truth is that we share responsibility for the prejudices and misunderstandings that continue to separate us, as this Protestant-Jewish view in *American Catholics* itself attests. It is possible to be provincial in time as well as in space. We free ourselves from our provincialisms only by seeing ourselves within the total historical development of which we are a part. The greater our grasp of our personal history, our religious history and our national history, the fewer our provincialisms, our angularities, our anxieties. For with the higher insights provided by historical understanding we will be less inclined to shore up those past cultural relics which, appropriate to another time and place, are today obstacles and obstructions. Because we will spend less time defending the indefensible and treasuring the trivial, we can concentrate our energies where they are most needed. We can not only conserve what is essential but can more readily show its relevance to the society and culture of which we are a part.

GIVEN the conditions in which the religious person must operate today this is no small undertaking. For if we have moved into a "post-Protestant" America, America has just as surely moved into a post-modern world that is only gradually and uncertainly taking form. It would be perilous if the imperatives and insights which religion alone can provide were to play no part, or only a negligible part, in shaping the future of that world. But this will be the more likely as we squander our heritage in maintaining hostilities that must be overcome rather than in strengthening the religious bonds that already exist. If we ever could, we can no longer "faintly trust the larger hope," and look for good to come from ill. The rewards which the religious dialogue holds out are so great that we must hopefully dare the risks which it necessarily entails.

One need not think of America's role in world affairs in terms of Manifest Destiny to believe that American society and culture will do much to determine the course of those affairs. The values which America transmits will not be those which are merely proclaimed and used for propagandizing slogans. They will be those values by which our society lives. Not unless we can show the relevance of religious principles and beliefs to our present condition will they be religious values.

Viewed in this perspective the American Catholic has a particular burden. For if he has gone through a time of trial to assert his place on the American scene he now faces an even greater challenge. Without cutting short the intensive self-criticism in which he is engaged, he is called upon to enter a dialogue that may be of crucial importance in our history. In a sense, the success of the greater dialogue depends upon the success of the inner dialogue. Not until American Catholics mature within the fullness of their own traditions will they encounter Americans of other commitments on those levels where the most meaningful exchange can take place.

However exciting the challenge may seem, it can be neither easy nor comfortable for those who take it seriously. It will demand strength and courage to offset the personal and collective anxieties that almost inevitably result from such a demanding task. Yet, to quote Father Henri de Lubac: "The fear of falling a prey to error must never prevent us from getting to the full truth. . . . Love of truth never goes without daring. That is one of the reasons why truth is not loved."



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# INTELLECTUALS AND THE CHURCH—II

CATHOLICS are often surprised, and maybe shocked would not be too strong a word, by the antagonism toward Catholicism one finds among American intellectuals. I know I have been. And it must be remembered that these same intellectuals are not necessarily scornful of all theologies. They are quite respectful of a Reinhold Niebuhr or a Paul Tillich, for example. But however venerable the Catholic intellectual tradition, the Church which stands behind it remains suspect in their eyes. It is, in some odd unspoken way regarded as the irredeemable enemy—the enemy of human intelligence and a perennial obstacle to man's search for truth. Just the words "Catholic," "Thomist," or "scholastic" are enough, in many academic circles, to turn up the heat.

I think I can say why. These words have all kinds of unfavorable connotations for the intellectual—the Inquisition, the Index of Forbidden Books, the Syllabus of Errors or any one of a dozen restrictive Vatican decrees, up to and including the most recent from the Roman Synod which forbade Catholics of that diocese to read Protestant publications.

Now I know that a Catholic case can be made for all these regulations, and such a case could be based on the Church's high regard for truth. Seen from a certain Catholic perspective then, none of them would be regarded as anti-intellectual. But the man in the secular academy does not see them from this lofty perspective. To be blunt, he sees them as the drastic efforts of a powerful Church to maintain its hold on the minds of its benighted followers. And it is practically impossible to convince him otherwise.

Of course these days there are few Catholics who would endorse the Inquisition. The idea of enforcing religious orthodoxy by imprisonment, torture and even death, I should think, would strike the most obtusely defensive as outrageous. However well the Inquisitorial mentality of bygone days may be understood, and even endorsed, the idea has become generally repulsive. And again, if the truth be told, most American Catholics have little affection for the Index of Forbidden Books. In a day when mass communications carry every conceivable idea far and wide, the belief that the Index can protect the faithful from being exposed to heretical and erroneous ideas strikes many as a howling anachronism. At least in this country, where illiteracy has been practically abolished, Catholics, like everyone else, can pick such ideas out of the air. They are on all sides. For the most part, the American Catholic who remains faithful to the Church does so because he has heard all the arguments and still chooses to remain in it.

I should think, then, that in our day and age the problem is not how to keep the Catholic protected from hostile ideas so much as it is how to expose the great world outside the Church to the Catholic intellectual tradition. For that tradition is not simply one of restriction and negation, though many think of it in such terms. It is a solid body of thought with a very strong intellectual and human appeal. It can, as it were, stand on its own legs. It does not need the special protection of Indexes or general prohibitions to hold its own among other systems of thought.

In its role of shepherd, the Church may employ these disciplinary means to protect the faith of its flock. But as the mother of a venerable intellectual tradition, the Church has no need for protection from truths, even those truths that come mingled with falsehood. There is no truth the Catholic tradition can not absorb. As Aquinas absorbed the truths of Aristotle, so can contemporary Catholic scholars fit the truths of the new sciences into the mosaic of Catholic philosophy.

This is a simple enough statement and indeed it is even something of a Catholic cliché. The trouble is no one quite believes it. The non-Catholic intellectual, when he hears it, usually considers it an empty boast. If you talk of the Catholic intellectual tradition to him, he will tell you that both Aristotle and Aquinas lived long ago and ask you how well their modern counterparts are doing, how well are the truths the latterday masters discovered being integrated into the Catholic tradition. And then, if he is typical, he will probably begin to talk again of the Index or the latest canonical restrictive measure he read about in the newspapers. You leave him knowing that he is not convinced; he will be eternally persuaded that the Catholic Faith does not open minds, it closes them.

And if you turn to the Catholic scholar to ask him about the new truths, often he will be likely to respond by recalling a few of the old ones or burst into a paean of praise for the glorious Catholic past. As for the future, he will probably shake his head sadly.

And so it is that except in rare cases, the Catholic intellectual tradition is a meaningless phrase for those outside the Church. When they do not see every contemporary expression of it as a threat to the values they hold dear, they look upon it as an ancient movement which somewhere along the line lost touch with life and now is sustained by a whole set of ecclesiastical strictures and censures which operate in its favor. Too often, for those in the Church, on the other hand, the tradition is relegated to the past, being regarded not as a living thing but as a treasured relic of bygone days, to be tended now as a loving family tends a precious heirloom.

JOHN COGLEY.



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# MR. LIPPMANN'S POWER AND PURPOSE

WITH A SHARP tone, which seems new to his famous syndicated column, Walter Lippmann has recently been deploring American private luxury, fostered, he charges, at the expense of national power. We must distinguish, he writes, "between private prosperity, measured in the total production of goods and services for private use, and national power, which is measured not only in terms of armaments but also in terms of wealth directed to education, to public health, to the conservation and development of the natural and the man-made resources of this country."

Fear of luxury and fear for the Republic are, classically, the beginnings of political wisdom, and it is not surprising that Mr. Lippmann should express this wisdom forcefully. But normally his writing is more searching than it has been in recent columns which have read so much like partisan slogans—Down with private prosperity! Up with national power! "National power" is certainly more than Mr. Lippmann here troubles to indicate, and just as certainly it is different.

Under examination, the economics of his proposition appears doubtful. The point has been made that national, governmental money and resources come from private individuals and businesses, and the more prosperous they are, the more money and resources are available to the government. Various economists have pointed out that a large proportion of conservation and development comes from private investment, and this tends to rise as the government's "national" demands and taxes are kept down. Historians can also show that extra "national" activities in America often lead to the spread of money, consumable goods, and bureaucratic jobs more than to the conservation and development of resources.

Mr. Lippmann begs the organizational question. What is the modern version of the "citizen militia"? To what extent is private prosperity convertible, in a pinch, to public force? Health and education must pertain peculiarly to individual persons, but if they are good, then by definition they benefit not only the individuals but all society. There can be a similar harmony between private conservation and development of our resources and the power of the Republic. It may not be private prosperity which robs the nation, but a failure of mind and will which turns material riches into a human deficit, both private and public.

There is also the point to consider that energetic private lives with an ascetic avoidance of personal luxury, motivated by a charitable and public spirit, actually withdraw functions and worries and powers from the realm of nation and government. But society is rendered more powerful.

What assurance is there that education and health services, and conservation and development of resources lead to "national power"? That depends. Utilitarian education aimed at state power probably becomes corrupt and decays. An unspecified, generalized health service could foster birth control, abortion, and mercy killings, or physical, biological and psychological invalidism, rather than life and energy and strength. What is the optimum output of stimulants and tranquilizers? Conservation and development to enlarge the bulk of the national state, along with all the rest of the federalizing measures so frequently proposed, appear to lead to state centralism. But that end can be reached easily enough in the weakest condition. The objection would still have to be met: a "statist," or socialist society, over the stretch, is not likely to be as strong as a relatively free society; it is not as good.

National power is not an end in itself and does not in itself supply to the people of a nation the stimulus necessary for its development. There has to be a purpose, and a hard self-discipline of the leaders pursuing the purpose, and a discipline of the populace, either shared self-discipline or successfully imposed discipline. Now Mr. Lippmann forcefully repudiates private luxury as the purpose of the state and national power. In a utilitarian, hedonist period, this is a great step. But a positive, unifying purpose is harder to vitalize, and our public philosophers, even Mr. Lippmann, have not yet done much to help.

Most obviously, they steer us away from the rousing concept of a crusade. Soviet Communism enjoys an immunity from our enthusiasm which antique Moors and Arabs and Turks must envy in their celestial oases. No satellite land or people is presented to us as nearly holy enough for us to want, seriously, to free. At home, we are shown no constitutional or traditional form or structure worthy of consistent future development, and of protection now from socialist pressures and contortions. More profoundly, modern teaching generally inculcates an unanchored relativism, agnostic secularism, or shadowy deism, which, however attractively ornamented they may be, cannot pretend to be deeply stirring. They provide little support for national power, beyond some very individualistic, quite private sense of duty and fitness.

What national purpose is proposed for a collection of individualists trained in these schools; what purposeful unity for a society on principle uncritically pluralist? Before being scolded for frittering away our national power, we ought to be shown good reasons to maintain it, and it is to writers like Mr. Lippmann that we would look for lessons.

PHILIP BURNHAM.



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*Brendan Behan is preoccupied with the past but no longer believes in it*

# An Irish Success

by SAM HYNES

IT IS one of the truest of truisms that modern English literature has been made not by Englishmen, but by Americans, Irishmen, Welshmen, and even one great Pole. The Irish in particular have shaped the literature of the country that they are supposed to hate, and it is not surprising, considering the powers of Yeats and Shaw and Joyce and O'Casey, that the English should respond to the latest Irish genius in an almost automatic way. Brendan Behan is his name, and after two plays and an autobiography he is being compared to O'Casey, and described as the author of masterpieces. One might well wonder about the effect of a specifically "Irish" success upon a serious Irish writer.

Behan's background is as Irish as any Sinn Feiner could wish. He was born north of the Liffey and grew up in Dublin; he left school at thirteen and three years later was in an English jail for I.R.A. activities. All told he served eight years for political offenses. He now lives in Dublin, writes "in an isolated cottage in the West" (I'm quoting a dust-jacket here) and, to judge from coverage in the English press, does his serious drinking in London.

As one might expect, Behan's books have only two subjects—prison life and the I.R.A. "The Quare Fellow," his first play, is set in an Irish prison; "The Hostage" one might describe as I.R.A. vaudeville; and *Borstal Boy,* the autobiography, begins with young Brendan's arrest and ends with his release from juvenile detention. Apparently nothing that has happened to Behan in the last ten years has interested him as a literary subject; in this he resembles his fellow Dubliner, Joyce, whose usable experience stopped when he left Dublin as a young man.

Behan's two plays are "experimental" plays, and not only because they were first performed in the Theatre Workshop, an experimental theater in East London. Neither play, strictly speaking, has a plot; they both derive what order they have rather from a central fact —in each case the impending death of an off-stage character who is never seen. The unity lies in the responses of the characters to the reality of death. But though the plays are built around death, they are nevertheless comedies, often broad and farcical, including comic songs, vaudeville turns, and tired dialect jokes.

"The Quare Fellow" could be described as a play about capital punishment, but one would have to add at once that it is not a thesis-play, in the sense that Ibsen's and Galsworthy's are—Behan is not arguing a position, or inciting his audiences to action. The play is set in the twenty-four hours before a man is hanged for murder. During those hours prisoners discuss the approaching death, bet on it, joke about it, and finally dig the condemned man's grave; wardens are indifferent or disturbed, according to their natures. In the end the man is hanged, and the curtain falls as the gravediggers quarrel over his last letters.

IN COMPARISON with the run of new plays, "The Quare Fellow" is an interesting and imaginative work. It is unconventional and free of clichés; it moves rapidly, develops considerable tension as the execution approaches, and has a number of vivid, though somewhat simplified, characters. But its greatest virtue is in the quality of the dialogue. Behan has a fine ear for tough, colloquial speech, and for the poetry that is hidden in it. Here, for example, an old convict thinks of the condemned man:

"I saw the quare fellow in here a couple of years ago. He was a young hard chaw like you in all the pride of his strength and impudence. He was kicking a ball about over in a yard and I was working around with poor old Mockridge, neither of us minding no one. All of a sudden I gets such a wallop on the head it knocks the legs from under me and very nigh cuts off my ear. 'You headed that well,' says he, and I deaf for three days after it! Who's got the best of it now, young as he is and strong as he is? How will his own ear feel tomorrow morning, with the washer under it, and whose legs will be weakest when the trap goes down and he's slung into the pit? And what use is the young heart?"

"The Quare Fellow" is also frequently very funny (Behan calls it "a comedy-drama"). Still, it isn't really a good play, and it is not good because action is still

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the essence of drama, and in "The Quare Fellow" the characters, for all their apparent vitality and busy-ness, don't *do* anything.

Or, to put this observation another way, we look in the drama for the effects of changing circumstances upon character; only in the lowest dramatic forms, farce and melodrama, are we content with change in circumstances alone. This lesser form of drama is what Behan offers us, and in this sense "The Quare Fellow" is a capital-punishment farce; circumstances change, the quare fellow is hanged, but the characters, as defined in the early scenes, are not discernibly changed by the event, and the play ends as it began, a world eternally divided into prisoners and wardens, the lags and the screws.

Behan's second play, "The Hostage," is in some ways an improvement on "The Quare Fellow," though in essentials it repeats the first play. The scene is a brothel run by an I.R.A. veteran of "The Troubles," and inhabited by a burlesque collection of prostitutes, homosexuals and madmen. To this bedlam an I.R.A. man brings an English soldier, as hostage for an I.R.A. prisoner condemned to death. The time of the play is again the hours before the execution, and the play is organized through the grouping of attitudes toward death. There is a good deal of talk about the "old I.R.A." and the "new I.R.A."—the old were hard-drinking radicals, while the new are teetotal Jansenists —but both are ridiculed, along with the Royal family, Peter Townsend, Mr. Macmillan, and the Anglo-Saxon world in general.

In the end the hostage dies a meaningless, accidental death, and then pops up again to sing a comic song. The whole play oscillates between irony and pity: irony without purpose and pity without focus. But purposeless irony is finally a denial of values, and unfocussed pity is sentimentality. This is most evident in the linking of death and farce which is Behan's most characteristic device; it is the tough con's protective refusal to expose himself through emotion, but it is also a failure of humanity, and ultimately of creative intelligence, since it determines the form of the plays.

THE INTELLECTUAL and formal shoddiness of "The Hostage" is somewhat obscured for its audiences (though not for its readers) by the amount of strenuous and entertaining activity that goes on on the stage. Characters sing Irish ballads and comic songs, dance, fight, and play on the bagpipe, and there is a great deal of headlong rushing about. The effect is vigorous and compelling, and the whole affair is great fun, but the turmoil of the play has led some reviewers to confuse uproar with art, and to take energy for genius (an error also frequently made in judgments of the novels of Thomas Wolfe, a writer to whom Behan bears some resemblance).

But serious drama must embody thought in its action, must in the end say something about the nature of human values, though that something need not be quite paraphraseable. Behan has not yet reached this level; he can control his medium, and his audience as well, for the duration of the performance, but he hasn't demonstrated that he has any ideas as vigorous as his stage effects.

*Borstal Boy,* being an autobiography, is less subject to these negative judgments. Chronology is all the order we demand of autobiography, and Behan's term in prison provides a natural beginning and ending to his narrative, so that the story has a built-in wholeness. The initiation of a young Irishman into English prison life provides Behan with the kind of material which he handles most easily, and sufficient opportunity for the demonstration of his most impressive gifts—his infallible ear for the richness of vulgar speech, and his remarkable capacity for taut, economical reporting of violent action.

In a more expansive medium, he has more time to develop character, and the prisoners and guards of the Borstal are more credible and less melodramatic than the sketchy farcical characters of the plays. Yet even so we do not see very far into anyone in the book, not even the narrator, and its value is not in what we learn about men's deep responses to the brutal conditions of prison life, but in the details of those conditions themselves.

It is worth noting that *Borstal Boy,* Behan's best work, is the only one not set in Ireland; the English jail seems to have liberated him from his past. Nevertheless, the book is very Irish, not only in its frequent allusions to the narrator's background, but also in its tone, in the quality of its humor, and in its prose style. For Irish writers, as for American Southerners, the past may narrow down to a preoccupation with a short period of violent civil war, and a festering sense of the injustices and failures of that struggle. Some great writing has come out of that obsession, but like any other obsession it tends to distort reality. No other national literature has so much self-contempt, so much disgust and aimless rage as the Irish, and these feelings seem to stem from complex feelings toward the Irish struggle for national identity. Irish writers from Joyce to Honor Tracy have found it easy, even natural, to destroy, with comedy or with withering irony, the follies of their countrymen. Not many have found nobility among them.

BEHAN'S relation to the Irish past is an especially difficult one, since he is preoccupied with it at the same time that he no longer believes in it. When someone in "The Hostage" makes a patriotic speech, the old Sinn Feiner snaps back: "Don't make me to use a coarse expression, you silly old bitch. This is nineteen-



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fifty-eight, and the days of the heroes is over this thirty-five years past. Long over, finished and done with. The I.R.A. and the War of Independence are as dead as the Charleston." Young Brendan, in *Borstal Boy,* is related to the revolutionary heroes in much the same way that John Osborne's Jimmy Porter is related to the heroes of Kipling and Henty—he is the anti-hero, who sheds the light of corrosive irony upon values which once were sufficient motivation for heroic action, but aren't any longer. But purposeless irony, it may be repeated, is a destructive instrument, not in itself sufficient support for the artist.

There is another, and more strictly literary, sense in which Behan is at the mercy of his Irishness—I mean the Irish idiom in which thus far he has written. Not only the speeches of Irish characters, but the whole of *Borstal Boy* is written in a colloquial style which is often close to being a parody of itself. The passage quoted above from "The Quare Fellow" will serve as an example. The speech is firm and effective in its use of Irish rhythms and phrases, but even so it is near the edge of that Erin Go Bragh style which one associates with Irish tenors and music hall comedians and Saint Patrick's Day on Amsterdam Avenue. Over the years since Synge and the early Yeats, Irish habits of speech have accumulated such a weight of whimsy and sentiment as to make them virtually unusable for the serious writer.

And one must admit that Behan *is* a serious writer, a writer of enormous vitality and force, and of more promise than any to come out of Ireland in a long time. But thus far he is only promising, and the lesson of his work is simply this—that vitality without form is not enough, that emotion without thought is not enough, and that in the end we seek the informing mind, playing upon the uproar of experience, and giving to it discipline and order. In Behan's work we look for it in vain.

---

### ABECEDARY FOR THOMASES

As bravery, courage,
differ, even faith,
graced hope, in
joining knowledge, love,
makes Now our
peace, quest resolving;
surely, Thomases,
undergoing
verifies wisdom,
Xian yearning,
zeal.

JOHN FANDEL.

# THE SCREEN

## THE GIRLS TAKE OVER

SOPHIA LOREN, the beautiful star of Italian and American movies who has of late also proved herself as an actress, gives her best performance to date in "Heller in Pink Tights," a wild, harum-scarum satire on westerns. Avoiding the clichés of other horse operas and even kidding them and the Old West of the 1880's, "Heller" has a witty script written by Dudley Nichols and Walter Bernstein from Louis L'Amour's novel about a theatrical troupe who tour the frontier. As the leading lady of this troupe, a luscious blonde with a wicked gleam in her eye and an inability to tell the difference between theatrical make-believe and unadorned reality, Miss Loren sparkles through scene after scene trifling with her creditors, audience, and friends and foes alike. She's due for a comeuppance and how she gets it makes a lively and amusing movie.

"Heller in Pink Tights" has many things to recommend it besides Sophia and its satirical flourishes. The production under Carlo Ponti and Marcello Girosi is extraordinarily handsome, with an imaginative use of color, a display of Arizona scenery and an attention to detail in costumes and sets that gives the picture an air of authenticity. Under George Cukor's direction, the cast with Sophia Loren are excellent: Anthony Quinn, as the troupe's owner-manager who takes his star very seriously and some day in the vague future plans to marry her; Eileen Heckart, as the troupe's character actress who is sensitive about her age; Margaret O'Brien, as her ingenue-daughter who admits to being twenty and hopes to snare Quinn from Sophia; Edmund Lowe, as another member of the company; George Mathews, as the theater-saloon-hotel owner in Cheyenne who objects to the troupe's doing anything as cultural as "La Belle Helene" but applauds their version of "Mazeppa" with Sophia playing the boy-hero who's tied to a horse; Steve Forrest, as a ruthless gunman who wins the poker game in which Sophia offers herself as collateral; Ramon Novarro, as the villain who rules the town of Bonanza and is astounded when Sophia turns up to collect the $5,000 he owes Steve Forrest. Along with its excitement and fun, "Heller" has its serious moments. Perhaps it gets too serious at times; but the story always swings back to the satirical; and the dialogue is bright throughout.

KAY KENDALL, who lent beauty, style and class to the English and American movies in which she appeared, is exceptionally beautiful and stylish in "Once More, With Feeling." It is unfortunate that her



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last film (she died shortly after it was finished last year) isn't worthy of her talents. The best that can be said for it is that it's a pretty bit of fluff. Producer-director Stanley Donen must have realized that the script didn't amount to much, and he made up for its vacuity by decorating his picture with handsome props and sets, an attractive cast and Givenchy gowns for Miss Kendall that will make women drool.

The plot, in the screenplay written by Harry Kurnitz from his own stage play, mainly concerns the matrimonial bickering of a musical couple: an ill-tempered orchestra conductor (Yul Brynner), whose greatest loves are himself and music; and his wife (Kay Kendall), who plays a harp but also spends a lot of time placating her stormy husband. Because the script is so talky, director Donen tries to introduce some action by having Brynner break a lot of things—like batons, records, bouquets of flowers, harps; he even smashes a violin over his violinist's head. Kay finally gets fed up, walks out on her temperamental maestro, teaches at a college, falls in love with the college president (Geoffrey Toone) and then foolishly returns to divorce Yul. But it turns out they were never married! So they have to get married so they can get a divorce, etc., etc. The tiresome routine starts all over again, and I couldn't stand it once more, even with feeling.

JULIE HARRIS, who lends distinction to anything she's in and appears far too seldom in movies, runs up against some stiff competition in "The Poacher's Daughter," a film made in Ireland with the Abbey Theatre Players. But as always Miss Harris shines, and she will endear herself particularly to American audiences because her brogue isn't quite so thick as that of her co-players, all of whom are fine actors but who are, unfortunately, sometimes a touch difficult to understand.

Once I got used to the dialect, however, I found the movie quite absorbing. Its plot, stemming from "The New Gossoon" by George Shiels, concerns an irresponsible young fellow (Tim Seeley) whose widow-mother (Maire Kean) insists that the boy be given the fine farm that is his inheritance, but objects to his frequent visits to the nearby cottage of a poacher. This conniving and cunning old man (Harry Brogan) hopes the soon-to-be-wealthy gossoon will marry his daughter. And the daughter (Julie Harris) hopes so too. The story gets quite complicated with the usual plethora of Irish characters who are more whimsical than sensible, but it succeeds in putting over its points well—particularly the idea that women rule the roost and do a good job of it considering that most of their men need some pushing around. How the boy's fiancée and his mother finally get together and how the boy himself is straightened out make for pleasant entertainment. Beautifully and simply photographed in black-and-white, "The Poacher's Daughter" is the kind of thoughtful, regional comedy that movies don't tackle often enough; and its charm is greatly heightened by the delightful presence of Julie Harris.

PHILIP T. HARTUNG.


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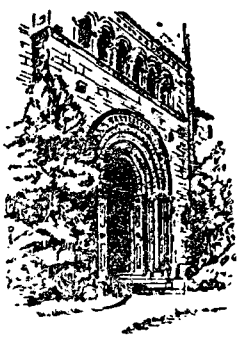

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# THE STAGE

## MISS B AND MR. A

MISS LAUREN BACALL, lithe and lissome, armored against fate with that invincible chic of all *les belles dames sans merci* who scud heedlessly about the seas of *Vogue,* is the only point of happy reference in "Goodbye, Charlie." She has not, to herald her return, an occasion of grace: she must *mean,* that is, not simply be, and what she must mean is another of Mr. George Axelrod's fantasies of a kind of ravening femaleness. Nor is one's pleasure in Miss Bacall at the persuasion of any native or conscious art. It was James Agee, I recall, who observed of Miss Bacall at another time that she had personality to burn, and that she burned both ends against an extremely short middle. Rather the lady charms because, as painters say, she "composes well," and because—in a larger sense—she is so American an enterprise, her glamour so secure and artful a synthesis of those modes of allure and erotic fascination which have dominated two decades of our manners.

Mr. Axelrod is a gross decline from the beguiling Bacall. You have heard, to be sure, of Restoration comedy, of farce, of comedies of manners, bed and



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drawing rooms. Mr. Axelrod works the new vineyard —Westport Comedy, so classified by Mr. Robert Brustein (after a native watering-place) and one of the remarkable artifacts of American theater. Westport Comedy is at once compulsively lubricious and convulsively moralistic. Sex is its seasoning, not its meat: *that* is bourgeois reassurance. Sex as tragedy, health, desire, lust, bawdry, obsession, does not occupy the Westporters, producer and consumer. In the study, in the darkened theater, they rather ask: Can Miss Arlene Francis (in clothes by Scaasi) be attractive after forty? Should Miss Claudette Colbert (in clothes by Castillo) trust her husband (Mr. Charles Boyer, to boot) with his students? *Is the American woman safe?*

Mr. Axelrod—and is he mouse or man?—answers with a furry little squeak, *yes.* Still, while the cat's away. . . . In "Goodbye, Charlie," the mouse *will* play with biological *transvestism,* and *that,* I thought, at least might trouble the midnight sleep of pilgrims on the 11:42 outward bound. Wrong again, I concede to the tumbrils of the New York, New Haven and Hartford. Move over Molière, Shakespeare, Shaw: Westport here! *(At the Lyceum.)*

* * *

With a rash of old business to conclude, I have still to bring to the attention of those who might have missed it Mr. John Henry Raleigh's essay "O'Neill and Irish Catholicism" in the current number but one of *Partisan Review:* an eloquent unraveling of "Long Day's Journey into Night," and a fearfully potent investigation in the pathology of national experience.

RICHARD HAYES.

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**BOOKS**

# Acute Apprehension of the Visible Rome

**A TIME IN ROME. By Elizabeth Bowen. Knopf. $4.**

By MAX COSMAN

AUTOBIOGRAPHIC referral is a thing to reckon with in Elizabeth Bowen's works. It may not be apparent in her fiction or criticism—by their very nature these genres disguise private disclosure—but it is quite obvious in her historical writing. *Bowen's Court,* for example, could never have come into being had it not afforded her an opportunity to memorialize the estate held by her family since Cromwell's day.

Her overt, that is, specific, interrogation of self seems to have begun in 1934, the year when she contributed some recollections of Downe House for that arraignment of a British institution which Graham Greene edited under the name of *The Old School.* Naturally, it continued to function, from time to time, in memorabilia like her own *Seven Winters* or John Lehmann's symposium on Coming to London. And here it is in the volume before us, ardent, ordered, more extensive than ever.

*A Time in Rome,* looked at superficially, is a record of a three-months' stay in the city indicated. By the same token, it is a tourist's guide to the place's contemporaneities and ruins. Considered more closely, however, it turns out to be a sensitive individual's hail and farewell to something inexpressibly dear. In this respect, if one wishes to press the matter, it is really a canticle of adoration to that which abides all questions.

Nevertheless, Miss Bowen is as little a bemused reporter as our own Mary McCarthy. The irrepressible intelligence which once let her speak of her grandmother's love for her "as a kind of atonement, for she had not got on well with my mother" notes now that "Rome as a whole appears absolutely flat, or if anything sunken in the middle, like a golden-brown pudding or cake which has failed to rise."

It makes her comment in lover-like but ambiguous fashion on a host of things, from the noise of the streets to the passion of citizens for getting out of town whenever they can. Nor will she nice-Nelly her language. When she has to, she speaks out in terms like "the costive drip of a fountain."

There is pertinency, to be sure, in this frankness. It shows in the respect she has for fact or date. Where really are those oft-referred-to seven hills of Rome? The Capitoline, the Palatine, the Aventine—yes, they are unmistakable. But not so the Caelian and the rest. And what is the correct genealogy of the Julio-Claudian line of emperors, and the Flavin? One has to get these items straight to have an ethical conception of history, for "untruths are thieves," as she puts it, "robbing us of a birthright."

This feeling for reality leads Miss Bowen to discussions which may be imaginative but not unfounded. How immediately acceptable is her explanation of the sleeplessness of Romans under the Empire (among other reasons: the jerry-built tenement houses, *insulae,* tended to collapse) and her description of the life of the Vestal Virgins (so different from that of the Julias and Messalinas on the one hand and that of the feminine Christian martyrs," the emancipates under God," on the other).

As she makes the rounds of the Roman landscape—her "abnormally acute apprehension of the visible world," to use Jocelyn Brooke's phrase, so operative that no piazza, no cemetery, no gate, no church is too secret to escape her—her instinct as writer prompts her to celebrate great fellow beings. Her choice is catholic. Cellini gets his pages. Claudius's empress ("what might not Livia have done with muslin!") is also set down in detail. But a most significant sympathy goes to that former Pharisee, "born free" in Tarsus in Cilicia—St. Paul. Him Miss Bowen follows lov-



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ingly through epistle and discourse right up to his very advance on Rome.

Sojourns, however, even in realms of gold, come to an end. Shortly before leaving for home, she is taken to the Beatification, in St. Peter's, of the Christian Chinese martyrs of the Boxer uprising. The occasion is unique, for, though very ill a short time before, Pius XII appears in the procession. Continues Miss Bowen: "no so tumultuous and rejoicing a wave of love of thousands for one could ever have been imagined breaking, gathering up again, again breaking. Nothing could contain it."

But contain it as an experience to top other experiences is what she does in *A Time in Rome*. In so doing, critically yet not astringently, eloquently but not garrulously, she makes us privy to her exaltation in the "abiding city." And, if the triple "my darling" of her penultimate sentence is any hint, to something just as incommensurate: her continued yearning for Alan Cameron, her husband who died less than a decade ago.

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## Critic of Our Age

THE WORLD'S LAST NIGHT and Other Essays. By C. S. Lewis. Harcourt, Brace. $3.

By PHILIP DEASY

THE TITLE essay of this collection of seven, "The World's Last Night," has nothing to do with hydrogen bomb warfare or even with its threat. It has to do with the Second Coming, an apocalyptic doctrine which Mr. Lewis takes with great seriousness and which he discusses with particular attention to why modern man is not likely to take the doctrine with anything like the same seriousness. Mr. Lewis, that is to say, believes in the Second Coming as he believes in the Incarnation. He believes in it as a fact, not as a dream, a myth, a fiction, and as a fact the logical consequences and implications of which are to be accepted unflinchingly.

In this essay and three of the others, "Religion and Rocketry," "The Efficacy of Prayer," and "Obstinacy in Belief," Mr. Lewis equivocates not in the slightest in his answer to the question, "What think ye of Christ? Whose Son is He?" At the same time he is quite aware that his kind of faith is a twentieth-century rarity. As his devil remarks, "All said and done, my friends, it will be an ill day for us if what most humans mean by 'religion' ever vanishes from the Earth. It can still send us the truly delicious sins. . . . Nowhere do we tempt so successfully as on the very steps of the altar."

Mr. Lewis's devil? Indeed it is his Disgrace, ol' Screwtape himself, who gets special billing on the front of the book's dust jacket and a descriptive note inside about his dialogue, which is praised as "in many ways one of the most brilliant and devastating essays Mr. Lewis has ever written." It isn't really that good. Considering Screwtape's previous performances, it's rather pallid. His targets in the toast he proposes at the annual dinner of the Tempters' Training College for Young Devils are such contemporary conditions as Togetherness, Being Like Folks, the "I'm-as-good-as-you" spirit, Conformity, Equality in Education, all of which, Screwtape should know, have been shot at so often lately that even a devil's darts now lose much of their sting and force.

To contemplate Mr. Lewis at his astrigent best, when he deserves those adjectives "brilliant" and "devastating" one must turn to another essay, "Lilies that Fester." Here the main target is Culture, a dangerous and embarrassing word, which when used as an abstraction, or as an end to be obtained directly, is self-defeating. When one is experiencing a deep and genuine enjoyment of poetry, for example, culture is the farthest thing from one's mind. To introduce it is to kill the experience. Mr. Lewis has particular fun about teaching a student of poetry "appreciation," and about the tests that prove appreciation has been produced. If the student appreciates, he is cultured, and if he is cultured he is accepted into the Managerial or Ruling Class in the Welfare Society. The word for this condition is Charientocracy, and needless to say Mr. Lewis doesn't think the condition a desirable one.

Like other critics of our modern age Mr. Lewis is given to exaggeration. He believes that if something is exaggerated people are less likely to overlook it. That may be so, but exaggerations from one so out of sympathy with the twentieth-century world as Mr. Lewis are often likely to be simply unfair. Thus, "The Democracies were surprised lately when they found that Russia had got ahead of them in science. What a delicious specimen of human blindness; If the whole tendency of their society is opposed to every sort of excellence, why did they expect their scientists to excel?" And . . . "Our pioneers in outer space . . . will be the needy and greedy adventurer or the ruthless technical expert. They will do as their kind has always done." He adds later, "But let us thank God that we are still very far from travel to other worlds. I have wondered before whether the vast astronomical distances may not be God's quarantine precautions. They prevent the spiritual infection of a fallen species from spreading."

A review of a book of essays requires a note about style. On that score the discriminating lover of the English language can be assured that in reading *The World's Last Night* he will savor a prose, G. K. Chestertonian flavor and all, as delectable as any in contemporary writing.

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## The Future Church

A CANTICLE FOR LEIBOWITZ. By Walter M. Miller, Jr. Lippincott. $4.95.

By EDWIN KENNEBECK

THIS very good, partly humorous historical novel is about the role of the Church as the preserver of wisdom and spiritual life in dark ages, but its era is in the future rather than the past. The first



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of its three parts takes place six hundred years from now, the second and third each six hundred years further on. As the story begins, the world is beginning to emerge from spiritual darkness, after a terrible era brought on by the "Flame Deluge," that is, the first atomic war. As it ends, another nuclear war is engulfing the earth, and the whole cycle of man is starting anew with a creature of primal innocence who appears in a very strange form indeed.

The first principal character we meet is Brother Francis Gerard, a young novice at Leibowitz Abbey somewhere in what is now the Southwest United States. When he was a child Brother Francis had been sold to a shaman up in the Utah country; but he had escaped, so that instead of becoming the medicine man of his illiterate shepherd tribe he was taken in by the abbey. While making his Lenten fast in the desert, he comes upon an ancient hole marked, in pre-Deluge English, "Fallout Survival Shelter." He knows that according to tradition the Blessed Isaac Leibowitz, founder of his order, had succumbed to a Fallout, though he is not quite sure what sort of creature the Fallout was. Leibowitz, a twentieth-century scientist, had lost his wife in the Flame Deluge and had fled to a Cistercian monastery during the savage years after the catastrophe. Later he became a priest and after more years had founded an order especially devoted to preserving human history in the form of the various documents and objects kept under the name of Memorabilia.

On exploring the shelter, Brother Francis comes upon some papers—one includes a shopping list—which seem to be written in the very hand of the Blessed Leibowitz. His discoveries, which he knows little about, are greeted with skepticism by his abbot. The rest of Brother Francis's tale is primarily about the gradual recognition by New Rome of the authenticity of the papers, and finally the beatification of Leibowitz.

Part two of the novel shows us a world more complexly organized, though still threatened by terrible battles between the small nations that have grown up, but still without much practical scientific knowledge. One monk of the abbey, however, manages to re-discover the process of making electric light. The world of part three is once again on the verge of complete nuclear destruction. It is a time of space-ships, of automobiles which the driver directs simply by dialing his destination, of even more complicated mutant animals and humans than before—creatures with more than the normal number of members, and even a woman with two heads. These are peripheral during most of the tale, which comes to focus upon the abbot's final attempts, as an immense war breaks out, to send a small colony of monks and other people off to another planet, there to preserve the Memorabilia for the future race of mankind.

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ligent, skillfully oblique, and often funny. Mr. Miller evidently knows a good deal about the language and protocol of the Church, and he cleverly adapts its forms—such as prayers and official pronouncements in Latin—to the pattern of his story. At one point he brings two principal characters, an abbot and an atheistic scholar, into an argument over whether the abbey's collection of scientific information should be given over to the secular colleges, as the atheist believes, to hasten the building of a better world, or kept confined to the abbey, so that man may not once again race to his own destruction; the discussion is terse and dramatic.

Those who have seen the motion picture "On the Beach," which I think completely avoids or cheapens the serious problems with which it pretends to deal, will find this novel an admirable contrast. Its faults in taste are at least faults brought on by the author's attempt to follow his material through. Unfortunately, Mr. Miller's various pictures do not go beyond their two-dimensional limitations: though he allows his abbots, for instance, some faults and senses of guilt, a substratum of pietism persists. Mr. Miller has not the penetration of a Graham Greene or, for that matter, a good historian. However, even in two dimensions his story is imaginative, amusing and disturbing.

### REVIEWERS

**Max Cosman is a frequent contributor to critical and scholarly journals.**

**Philip Deasy, for many years a teacher of English literature, is a frequent contributor to The Commonweal.**

**Edwin Kennebeck, a regular reviewer, is movie critic for *Today*.**

**RECORDS**

## Interpreters of Beethoven

LISTENING over a period of several consecutive days to all the Beethoven symphonies as recorded in stereo by Bruno Walter (Columbia) moves us to revise somewhat an earlier estimate based on a hearing of his work in only three or four of them. Majestic, Mozartean, gentle, unperturbed, Mr. Walter certainly is, and though these qualities are still rather incongruous in the craggier works (say, Nos. 3 and 5), a general evaluation now seems to involve not so much a question of rightness as it does one of personal preference.

Our preference remains for Toscanini overall. And we find other conductors immensely rewarding in individual symphonies: Ansermet in the 4th and 5th; Cluytens and Monteux in the 6th; Klemperer and Reiner in the 3rd and 7th; Cantelli in the 7th; Beecham in the 2nd. But Dr. Walter, based on his complete performance of the nine (and stereo may be more than a little beguiling in this album), takes his place as one of the few giants among Beethoven interpreters. Where other conductors, lacking his maturity and vision, tend to become fussy about subordinate details, Walter shuns the fussiness and is thus free to make his major points. He flows, of course, where Toscanini drives.

And now will Columbia and octogenarian Walter turn undivided attention to Mahler and Bruckner? We hope so.

* * *

Several absolutely first-rate orchestral and concerto recordings have been issued in recent weeks.

These include the Franck symphony played by the Philharmonia Orchestra under Carlo Maria Giulini (Angel); two violin concertos—Mozart's No. 3 and Prokofiev's No. 2—played by David Oistrakh with the Philharmonia, the soloist doubling as conductor in the former and Alceo Galliera conducting in the latter (Angel); Ravel's Daphnis and Chloe, London Symphony Orchestra, Monteux (London); Beethoven's Fourth Symphony, Suisse Romande Orchestra, Ansermet (London); Liszt's Faust Symphony and Orpheus symphonic



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poem, Royal Philharmonic, Beecham (Capitol-EMI); and two stunning albums from the Vienna Philharmonic, led in both instances by Herbert von Karajan. One, a single disc, is Strauss *Also Sprach Zarathustra* (London); the other, a four-record deluxe Soria Series album (Victor) called Vienna Philharmonic Festival, in which is heard Mozart's Symphony No. 40; Haydn's No. 104; Beethoven's Seventh; Brahms's First; and a group of Josef and Johann Strauss waltzes, polkas and overtures.

All of the above can be recommended without reservations. Impeccable taste, intelligence, classic restraint are among the qualities of conductors and soloists which lift their performances to the level of the sublime.

It is the Vienna Philharmonic entries that deserve, perhaps, special mention. If there are finer string choirs in existence, we have not heard them. And it is the Vienna strings that carry the load in every assignment. They are witty, sparkling, brilliant in the Mozart and Haydn. By turn, they are suave and biting in the Strauss, intense and emotional in the Beethoven and Brahms. And the other sections of this great orchestra prove to us again and again that there is no real weakness anywhere along the line in that ensemble.

A third album involving the Vienna Philharmonic and conductor Hans Schmidt-Isserstedt is really dominated by an amazing artist, Wilhelm Backhaus, whose performance of the Third Piano Concerto of Beethoven (London) must surely rank as one of the two or three best in the catalogue. Backhaus will be 76 in March. His virtuosity and technical facility remain unimpaired and, like Walter, he seems to be at the height of his interpretive powers.

A group of chamber music albums are worth more than passing notice, though space permits no more than such notice. These include a two-record set (Victor) of three piano quartets: Beethoven's in E-Flat; Schumann's in E-Flat; and Brahms' in C Minor, performed by the Festival Quartet, renowned artists whose first casual sessions for their own enjoyment at the Aspen festivals have led to the formation of a recording unit of considerable merit. Personnel include Szymon Goldberg, violin; William Primrose, viola; Nikolai Graudan, 'cello; Victor Babin, piano.

Angel and London have released Hephzibah Menuhin at the piano with the Amadeus String Quartet; the latter, Clifford Curzon with string members of the Vienna Octet. Victor has released a program of four bassoon concertos by Vivaldi, played by Sherman Walt and the Zimbler Sinfonietta. These chamber works will be commented on at greater length in a forthcoming discussion of the genre.

A re-recording of Lucia di Lammermoor (Angel) is worth hearing for the superb performance of Maria Callas, whose usual stridency and unbecoming flattening at the top of her register are held to a minimum.

And four collector's items from the EMI vaults in England have been issued by Angel in its Great Recording of the Century series. These include Chopin Waltzes by Cortot; two Mozart piano concertos by Schnabel; Beethoven's Archduke Trio by Thibaud, Cortot and Casals; and a Wagner program which reminds us of the greatness of heldentenor Lauritz Melchior.

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